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Geographical Factors of Korea

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS OF KOREA

A Thesis
Presented To
Dr. James Thompson
Eastern Illinois University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of The Requirements For The Degree
Master Of Science In Education

Plan B

by
Richard I. Rude

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the course of its long history of five thousand years, among other names Korea has been proudly called the "Land of Courtesy in the East" with the present population of approximately thirty millions. The people of Korea have been noted for their good manners and sober customs of wearing white clothing which has given rise to the appellation of the "White Clothing People" attests the purity of the people's in their national character.

Favored with beautiful natural scenery and mild climate, it is said to be the Switzerland of the Far East. The land is fertile enough to feed its people and the electric power generated in the North is enough to industrialize it. The varied and ample underground natural resources, if properly exploited, would make the land rich and prosperous.

Yet in spite of its potentialities, because Korea was weak militarily it suffered almost forty years under the yoke of Japanese rule. Thanks to the victory of the Allies, it was liberated from that yoke, but, only to be divided into two at the 38th parallel line, which seemed to be the dividing line of the Communist North and the Democratic South of Korea.

Under such circumstances the Communists in the North had been awaiting every chance to destroy the only legal government of the Republic

of Korea until at last they invaded the South in large force on June 25, 1950. It was a sudden incident and started off the unheard-of tragedy in the long history of the land as well as in the world.

The South Koreans bravely met the brunt of the attack. Backed by the United Nations, free countries which had seen the true color of red imperialism rushed to the rescue of the unfortunate land and people. After the Armistice was signed in July of 1953, Korea was still divided.

The attention of the world has been focused upon Korea, and yet there have been very few attempts to understand the land and the people. When I was in the service, it was quite awhile before I began to understand why we were fighting in a little country called "The Land of the Morning Calm." We had films in Information and Education which attempted to give us some idea as to why we were fighting. These helped, but the opportunities which I had in living with the Koreans gave me a far greater understanding of the people in Korea.

My first impression of their country upon landing in Inchon was far from that of passing under the Golden Gate Bridge coming home, but I soon learned to have a great respect for these people. It was a most wonderful experience and because I wanted to learn more of the customs, resources, and problems of the Korean people is the reason why I chose this topic.

It is very difficult to express how you feel about certain persons. We can learn a great deal from foreign countries. I am certainly indebted to my house boy named Kim who taught me a great deal in the few months that I knew him. He could be so contented with so little, which seemed to typify the Korean people. They readily expressed their

appreciation, and made me feel proud to have had an opportunity to help in some small way.

CHAPTER II

PHYSICAL FACTORS

Location

The major factor in Korea's history is its location in the heart of the Far East. Korea is surrounded by the major powers of Asia and the Pacific. These powers are vitally interested in controlling the strategically located country. This peninsula has become many times a battleground in a struggle for power. Honshu, the principle island of Japan, lies only 120 miles southeast. The Shantung peninsula of China lies to the west approximately the same distance. Manchuria, the northeastern province China, shares most of Korea's northern boundary. For eleven miles along the Tumen River lies Russia in the northeast.

In addition to Korea's strategic location in the Far East, its geographical character as a peninsula has been a key factor in its history. As a peninsula it has served as a bridge between powers on the continent of Asia and powers in the Pacific. The fundamental aspect of Korea is its peninsular location in the heart of the Far East.¹

Size and Shape

The Korean peninsula is not very large, with its adjacent islands

¹Shannon McCune, Korea's Heritage, (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956).

it comprises 85,285 square miles, which corresponds roughly to the area of Minnesota. Elongated and irregular in shape, it stretches about 600 miles between latitudes 43 degrees N. and latitude 34 degrees N. The northeastern section of the country is in the same latitude as New England, and the Southern section is the latitude of South Carolina.²

The peninsula is not of uniform width; from a broad base on the Manchurian border it narrows down to a waist of 120 miles between Wonsan and Pyongyang and then widens at the Hwanghae peninsula. It narrows again and extends to the southeast with a rather uniform width of some 160 miles.

The Sea of Japan to the east is relatively deep. On the west coast of Korea the Yellow Sea is very shallow in contrast to the Sea of Japan. The south coast, along the Korean Strait, has many islands, small bays, and peninsulas.³

Landforms

Figure 1 shows the geomorphic provinces into which Korea may be divided. A graben trending northeast-southwest through the middle of the country separates the more mountainous northern half of the peninsula from the south with its more extensive plains.⁴

²Shannon McCune, Korea's Heritage (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1956), p. 359.

³G. Etzel Percy, World Political Geography (Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1948) p. 359.

⁴"Notes on a Physiographic Diagram of Korea" Geographical Review Vol. XXXI, No. 4, October 1941, pp. 653-58.

There are four subdivisions recognized in the northern half.

1. The Northern Interior is a high mountainous land. There is very little level land and therefore the farmers have been forced to clear fields high on the mountain slopes. It has been exploited for its forests and water-power resources, but its mountain terrain has made it an isolating factor for the Korean peninsula.

2. The Northeastern Coastal Hills and Valleys Province. This area extends from the high interior of northern Korea to the deep Sea of Japan. A large part of this region is a complex of old granitic and metamorphic rock.

3. The Toman River Basin Province. This area comprises low hills and valleys. The river valley and suitable harbors has made the province an important transit region for Manchuhuan-Japanese trade.

Mr. McCune did not set aside the graben that divides northern from southern Korea because of its transitional character.

4. Central Tyosen Province. This area is an upraised crustal block. The Konzo Zan, or Diamond Mountains in the north, the most famous landforms in the peninsula, are the result of extreme weathering of igneous and metamorphic rock of unequal resistance. The western plains are irrigated by large-scale projects and rice is grown.

5. The Southeastern Littoral. This area possesses physiographic unity as a foothill zone at the eastern base of the Daihaku Zan. The mountain barrier to the west has isolated the region as a whole.

6. The Southern Mountains and Valleys Province. This province extends southwestward from the Daihaku Zan, dividing the Ratuko basin from those of the Kan and Kin Rivers and has also acted as a cultural barrier.

7. The Rakuto River Basin. This section occupies a large area of hilly country in southeastern Korea. The basin is geologically related to the near-by Japanese islands. It is close to Japan and the contacts with her have been close. Japan received much of her early culture from this province.

8. The Southern Littoral. This province consists of a maze of islands, peninsulas, abrupt hills, and minute plains.

9. Saisyu. It is a volcanic island southwest of the peninsula. Agriculture is limited by the sterile soil.

10. Uturyo. This is a small volcanic island out in the Japanese Sea to the east of the peninsula.

Simplifying the details of relief reveals many contrasts in land-forms. This manner of presentation of the geomorphology rightfully emphasize the mountainous character of the land, which impose severe limitations on the economy of the peninsula.

Climate

Just as relief is important to the farmers of Korea, so is the climate. The location between 33 degrees and 43 degrees North Latitude puts the peninsula in the belt of westerly winds and cyclonic storms. Modifying this climatic control, however, is the position of Korea on the eastward fringe of the world's largest land mass. The heating and cooling of the Asian land mass cause seasonal drifting of monsoon air, oceanward in winter and toward the continent in summer. The deep Sea of Japan and the shallow Yellow Sea on either side of the peninsula exercise additional climatic controls. In addition the variations

of elevations due to the mountainous land forms also lead to variations in the climate.⁵

Three controls dominate the climate of Korea; the latitudinal location in the planetary system of the westerlies and cyclonic storms; the Asiatic continental location and monsoon influence; and the maritime location between the deep Sea of Japan and the shallow Yellow Sea. All the climatic elements reflect these controls. Winter high pressures contrasts with summer low pressures; but the seasonal regime has non-periodic variations due to the passage of cyclonic storms. In most of Korea there is a cold winter season, with a mean January temperature below 32 degrees and a hot summer season, with a mean August temperature above 71.6 degrees; however, the range of temperatures is much greater in the north and in the interior than in the south and along the coasts.

The maximum of precipitation occurs in the summer, when the cyclonic storms, convectional storms, and typhoons cause disturbances in the warm, moist air drifting from the south under the monsoonal influence. During the winter the cold, dry air masses drifting from the interior of the continent are not conducive to much precipitation. The average annual precipitation ranges from 20 inches at one station in the northern interior to more than 60 inches at a station on the south coast.⁶

⁵G. Etzel Percy, World Political Geography (Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1948) p. 360.

⁶"Climatic Regions of Korea and Their Economy," Geographical Review, Vol. XXI, No.1, January 1941, pp. 95-99.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL FACTORS

Population

One of the important features of the population of Korea is the relative absence of minority groups.

There are certain distinctive characteristics about the distribution of people in Korea. There is a concentration of the population in the lowlands - along the river plains - and the sparsity of the habitation in the mountain lands of the interior.

Another dominant characteristic is the concentration of population in the south, where there is a better physical base for agriculture.

The last important factor of the distribution of people in Korea is the concentration in cities. Since 1930 the cities have had great growth, the dominant population group in Korea is still to be found in the rural village.

The natural increase in the population of Korea is about 1.1% annually which is greater than that of any European country (Russia Excluded) and as great as some of the American Republics.⁷

People

The Koreans are a mixture of Tungus and proto-Caucasian stock, gen-

⁷Andrew J. Grajdanzev, Korea Looks Ahead (American Council Institute of Pacific Relations, 1944), p. 20.

erally similar to other people of the Far East. A succession of waves of migration from the north has resulted in an amalgamation of strains and given them their general character.

In height the Koreans are midway between the shorter Japanese and the taller north Chinese and Manchus.

The average Korean has light yellow-brown skin. Most Koreans have brown eyes and are marked by a slight Mongolian eye fold. Their hair is straight or slightly curly, and dark brown to black in color. They have high and relatively prominent cheek bones with a concave nose.⁸

Language

The distinct ethnic character of Korea is reflected in the language. It is a polysyllabic language similar to the Altaic languages of central Asia.

The Korean people have developed their own unique language, despite the fact that the official written language of the Korean court through many centuries was Chinese. Their language is heavily loaded with borrowings, both in words and structure, from the Japanese and Chinese. When you take into account the geographical diversity of the land, dialectical differences throughout Korea are fewer than one might expect. These differences in dialects in Korea are due mainly to differences in historical developments. With the modern improvements in transportation and communication facilities and especially with the violent movements of populations because of the war in the peninsula,

⁸Shannon McCune, Korea's Heritage (Charles Tuttle Co., Rutland, Vermont, 1956), p. 61.

these differences have diminished in recent years.⁹

Religion

Korea has very little uniformity of religious belief or practice. You could find, in a typical Korean family, the women adhering to the Buddhist religion, which was introduced fifteen centuries ago; on the other hand, the men may be followers of the Confucian ethical system. In recent decades Christianity has been introduced and has a large number of devoted adherents. Christianity has had a profound effect on the culture and life of the people.

Chon-do-gyo is one religion which you might call uniquely Korean. This faith is an extremely eclectic one which its adherents believe has been able to combine the good features of Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity--as well as Taoism.¹⁰

⁹G. Etzel Percy, World Political Geography (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1948), p. 362

¹⁰Shannon McCune, Korea's Heritage (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1956) p. 70

CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Mineral Resources

1. Coal--Korea has large deposits of low-grade anthracite coal. The major producing area in the south is in the Samchok region, which had been developed by the Japanese.

Most of the Korean coal exports were from northern Korea, the major anthracite coal field being scattered in the northwestern section in the vicinity of Pyongyang.

Despite the scattered coal deposits Korea lacks one of the most important elements for modern industrialization--good-grade bituminous coal suitable for coking. Such coal, as well as steam coal for the railroad has to be imported. Korea has no petroleum.¹¹

2. Iron Ore--Korea has estimated iron ore reserves amounting to 1,200,000,000 tons. The country has developed her iron ore production in the last few years. The enclosed report shows the Korean Iron Ore Production.

3. Graphite--Korea has been one of the largest producers of graphite in the world. Amorphous and crystalline are the two types. The amorphous graphites are found in association with coal deposits, where fold-

¹¹Shannon McGune, Korea's Heritage (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956), p. 219.

ing, faulting, and igneous intrusion have changed the coal into graphite.

4. Tungsten--During the war years deposits of scheelite-bearing tactite in Korea were greatly developed, because of the demand for tungsten for the iron and steel industry. The major deposit in South Korea was at Songdong. Production has decreased since 1954.

PRODUCTION OF MAJOR MINERALS IN KOREA (in metric tons)

	1938	1944
Anthracite Coal	1,723,290	4,530,263
Lignite Coal	1,696,061	2,518,513
Iron Ore	768,000	3,331,814
Gold (in Kilograms)	27,788	598
Copper	5,828	5,193
Amorphous Graphite	44,815	74,879
Crystalline Graphite	12,503	28,427
Tungsten Ore	2,635	8,333
Lead	6,086	21,200
Zinc Ore	9,167	
Zinc (Metallic)		20,011
Manganese	780	33,584
Flourspar	37,391	75,227
Magnesite	31,937	157,745

Source: "The Bank of Korea," Economic Review, 1949.

KOREAN IRON ORE PRODUCTION, 1944

<u>Deposit</u>	<u>Metric Tons</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
NORTHERN KOREA		
Musan	1,050,679	31.5
Hasong	568,419	17.1
Kaechon	473,253	14.2
Yangyong	289,513	8.7
Iwon	276,963	8.3
Chaeryong	216,195	6.5
Others north of 38	346,035	10.4
SOUTHERN KOREA		
Total of all provinces	110,757	3.3
GRAND TOTAL	3,331,814	100.0

Source: Scap, WAT VNAR, Resources Section, Report No. 35, Mineral Industry of Korea in 1944.

5. Hydroelectric Resources-- The Japanese emphasized the development of hydroelectric power resources, especially in North Korea. The largest complete power plant was built on the Yalu River, at Supung, where the Japanese had constructed one of the largest dams in the world, roughly equivalent to Boulder Dam in the United States. In addition there are projects along the Yalu and its tributaries.

In addition to these hydroelectric power plants there were several power-generating plants which used coal or oil. During the war, the power plants of North Korea were subjected to very heavy air raids and most of the installations were gutted. There are some indications that these plants are being rehabilitated with equipment from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.¹²

Agricultural Resources

The basic Korean economy is agricultural. The Koreans are noted throughout the Far East as rice growers.

The cultivated area of Korea is 11,000,000 acres, and there are in Korea over 3,000,000 farms. The average size of a farm is less than four acres.¹³

If the farmer's land is suitably located, he will grow rice in preference to any other crop. A South Korean farmer may double-crop his field with barley. Upland fields are used for growing other cereals-- wheat, barley, millet, grain sorghum, and sometimes cotton or tobacco.

¹²Shannon McOune, Korea's Heritage (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956), pp. 221-24.

¹³Andrew J. Grajdanzev, Korea Looks Ahead (American Council Institute of Pacific Relations, 1944), p. 37.

NATURE AND GROWTH OF INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN KOREA

<u>Category</u>	<u>1938</u>		<u>1944</u>	
	<u>Factories</u>	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Factories</u>	<u>Workers</u>
Textiles	608	47,384	2,082	81,441
Metal Working	295	13,612	619	61,523
Machinery & Tools	613	24,745	1,226	64,048
Ceramics	342	11,310	1,952	44,192
Chemicals	1,618	52,293	1,019	70,338
Lumber & Woodworking	360	7,485	1,799	30,682
Printing-Binding	313	6,905	586	10,121
Food Processing	2,348	35,547	1,990	36,006
Gas & Electricity	34	939	140	1,725
Miscellaneous	<u>422</u>	<u>12,179</u>	<u>888</u>	<u>15,153</u>
TOTAL	6,953	212,459	12,301	421,229

Source: Annual Economic Review of Caosero, 1944.

Considerable regional differences in farm practices and types of crops are found in Korea. In the northern interior and in the mountain lands of central and southern Korea firefield and sedentary upland farming predominate; most of the crop land is devoted to hardy cereals; standards of living are low in this pioneer land. In the coastal areas of northern Korea paddy fields are extensive, but dry-field crops occupy most of the agricultural land cultivated by sedentary farmers.

Fishing

Fishing has long been an important subsidiary occupation for individual farm families. Korea's fishing industry is most important for food production. This industry also supplies an important commodity for foreign trade with Japan and Hong Kong. Korea has relatively rich fishing resources. Before World War II Korea was actually the sixth most important fishing country in the world. Fish and other marine

products are extremely important sources of proteins necessary to supplement the rice--dominated diet of the people.¹⁴

¹⁴Shannon McGune, Korea's Heritage (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1956), p. 112.

CHAPTER V

POLITICAL FACTORS

History and Government

Korea, formerly the Hermit Kingdom, has a recorded history since 57 B.C. and was united in a kingdom 668 A.D. It was at various times associated with the Chinese empire and the treaty that concluded the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 recognized Korea's complete independence. After Russia obtained a leasehold on Port Arthur and developed also its big port of Vladivostok, Korea, lying between them, was subject to Russian penetration and became to Japan "a dagger pointed at her heart." This helped bring on the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Japan occupied Korea; Russia recognized Japan's paramount interest there. In 1910 Japan annexed Korea as chosen.¹⁵

The Koreans have been able to mold their own peculiar culture and Mr. George M. McCune gave a very good summary:

"The long historical continuity, during which Korean cultural and social patterns became firmly fixed, has left a unique heritage to the Koreans. They became a nation of one race, one language, one culture, and one proud past. The homogeneity of the Korean people is a significant factor in an evaluation of Korean political problems. Whatever disunity and diversity appear on the Korean political stage are not products of fundamental differences in race or culture within the Korean community, but are consequences of less substantial causes."¹⁶

A matter of world interest was brought to light in June, 1950,

¹⁵G. Etzel Percy, World Political Geography (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1948), p. 362.

¹⁶George M. McCune, Korea Today (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 8-21.

which was the importance of Korea's geographic location. Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, the "international frontier" between the Communist-dominated world and the Free World had been sharply drawn at the thirty-eighth parallel dividing Korea.

The thirty-eighth parallel was initially designated to serve simply as a line of demarkation for the acceptance of Japanese surrender by Soviet and American troops. But this line--a line of convenience--had soon hardened into a solid boundary. When the armies from the north violated this frontier it turned Korea into a battlefield. Korea demonstrates vividly the fate of a small nation located in close proximity to great and competing powers.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

There will be other factors besides its geographical location and diversity that will play a part in the solution of Korea's problems.

The most important geographic realities concerning Korea are: it is a peninsula located in the heart of the Far East, the country has essential unity, and its geographic diversity.

In order to have peace and well-being to come to Korea the country must have cordial relations with the other countries of the Far East. Korea should be independent and unified and thus have an opportunity to profit from its regional resource pattern in building economic strength for all of its people.

Korea should attempt to improve the agricultural life of its country. They could have better seed selection, improved farm practices, and more modern irrigation.

The industrial phases of Korea should be rehabilitated. Although they do not have limitless resources, they could have expanded industries for peaceful objectives, for the improvement of living standards, and for the absorption into productive work of the increasing population.

One of the main arguments for unification is that neither half of a divided Korea can ever be truly self-sufficient. The south is the food basket; it can feed the whole country and still have a surplus. The north is suited for industry because of the presence of

hydroelectric power potential.

For Korea to survive as a free nation, therefore, it will be necessary to remove the Communists' opportunity to create their own order throughout the peninsula, and some think that this can be accomplished only by pushing the border of the Red world back across the Yalu. Abraham Lincoln said "A nation cannot survive half slave and half free." This can be appropriately supplied to Korea. In order to have Korea survive there must be a free Korea, a democratic Korea, and a unified Korea.

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